

South Korea: Media Report Large Boost in Funds for Technology Transfer

South Korea's Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) will quadruple its support for informal acquisition of foreign technology this year, according to ROK news reports. Part of the increase will fund a consolidated "brainpool project" administered by an international support group chartered by Seoul to recruit foreign scientists.

The 27 January 2003 *Chonja Sinmun*, a daily newspaper servicing the electronics industry and the science and technology community, carried an article by science reporter Kwon Sang-hui on a MOST program to recruit overseas scientists and engineers during the first half of 2003.

The article reported that the program has four parts: recruiting and making active use of famous overseas scientists over the midterm; utilizing overseas scientists and engineers over the long term; bringing in superior foreign students and researchers for training; and making use of on-site research personnel and their facilities abroad.

Compensation in the form of salaries, consulting fees, resettlement costs, and airfare reportedly will be provided, along with consignment research costs and support to administrators sent abroad to manage on-site research personnel and their facilities.

The same newspaper had reported on 8 January that MOST planned to use such a program to "solve domestic technological bottlenecks and absorb advanced, wellspring technological knowledge." Some 11.6 billion won (US \$9.6 million) will be spent on these programs in 2003, including 6.3 billion won to hire high-level foreign scientific "brains" and 800 million won on

"local overseas research personnel and their facilities," the paper said. The sum reportedly is a 383-percent increase over last year's recruitment budget.

Meanwhile, the 8 January 2003 *Munhwa Ilbo*, a daily newspaper owned by the Hyundai Group, observed that the expanded budget will help "integrate" MOST's independent efforts with the annual campaign to "recruit overseas scientific brains" administered by the Korea Federation of Science and Technology Societies (KOFST), an umbrella organization for overseas S&T groups composed of ethnic Koreans. The newspaper said that scientists with Ph.D.s brought to Korea under earlier runnings of this "brainpool" program would receive salary increases of 25 percent. An entirely new campaign to recruit 250 foreign scientists "for use in domestic universities and research labs" is also being funded, the newspaper said. KOFST provides on its Web site (www.kofst.or.kr) detailed data on the "brainpool" and other "cooperative" programs, including participating scientists, their projects, and sponsoring organizations.

KOFST's technology transfers and recruitment efforts were also discussed in media reports last July on its "2002 International Korean Scientists and Engineers General Conference," a triennial event that brings "domestic and overseas Korean scientists" to Seoul "to share new scientific and technological information." According to the 9 July 2002 *Hangyore Sinmun*, a left-of-center daily newspaper, 291 ethnic Korean scientists from 12 countries, including 170 from the United States (*MKS*, 9 July 2002), attended the conference to exchange information on developments in biotech and other areas.

According to the article in *Maeil Kyongje Sinmun*, a business-oriented newspaper, Kim Si-chung, the KOFST head, described the purpose of the gathering: "For this year's conference, we

have chosen the theme of contributing to South Korea's competitiveness through the globalization of science and technology." *Maeil Kyongje* noted that these "foreign compatriots" were to give "on the spot guidance" to ROK companies, universities, and research labs. KOFST reportedly also planned to finalize work on a database of overseas Korean scientists and engineers.